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S E R M O N

Preach'd at the
ASSIZES held at *Hertford*,
MARCH 5. 1721-2.
BEFORE
The Hon^{ble} Mr. Justice *POWYS*.

K
By ALLEN COWPER, M. A.

Publish'd at the Request of Mr. HIGH-SHERIFF, and the Gentlemen of the GRAND-JURY!

L O N D O N:

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Assess held at Hartford



T O
RALPH RADCLIFFE, Esq;
HIGH-SHERIFF
Of the County of HERTFORD:

AND TO
The GENTLEMEN of the *Grand-Jury*
of the said County, *Viz.*

Sir THOMAS CLARKE, *Knight.*

Edward Harrison, <i>Esq;</i>	Thomas Ansell, <i>Esq;</i>
William Plummer, <i>Esq;</i>	John Odgar, <i>Gent.</i>
Joseph Sabin, <i>Esq;</i>	Thomas Clarke, <i>Gent.</i>
Thomas Bigg, <i>Esq;</i>	Rivers Dickenson, <i>Gent.</i>
Richard Warden, <i>Esq;</i>	William Rayner, <i>Gent.</i>
Joshua Pembroke, <i>Esq;</i>	Thomas Joyce, <i>Gent.</i>
Richard Stratton, <i>Esq;</i>	James Handscombe, <i>Gent.</i>

T H I S
DISCOURSE

(with all due Respect)

Is DEDICATED by their

Most Obedient,

And most Humble Servant,

ALLEN COWPER.

T O

WILLIAM RANDOLPH, Esq.

HIGH-SHERIFF

Of the County of Hertford

AND TO

The Gentlemen of the Grand Jury
of the said County, &c.

Mr Thomas Clarke, Knight

Edward Harrison, Esq. || Thomas Audell, Esq.
 William Plummer, Esq. || John Odger, Esq.
 Joseph Sabin, Esq. || Thomas Clarke, Esq.
 Thomas Biggs, Esq. || Thomas Dickenson, Esq.
 Richard Warden, Esq. || William Rayner, Esq.
 Thomas Pembroke, Esq. || Thomas Joyce, Esq.
 Richard Stinson, Esq. || James Handcombe, Esq.



THIS

DISCOURSE

(with all due Respect)

Is Dedicated by their

Most Obedient

and most Humble Servants,

Allen Cowper.

R O M. xiiij. 10.

*Love worketh no ill to his
neighbour; therefore love is
the fulfilling of the law.*

TH E Words which I have now read, recommend unto you the great Duty of mutual Kindness and Benevolence: They represent it such as in Truth it is, not a single Precept of Religion only, but the final Result and Completion of all the rest; as that which can alone perfect and finish our Obedience, at once adorn the Man, and distinguish the Christian. This friendly Virtue has indeed the happiest Influence imaginable on the Course of human Affairs: It fills the Mind possessed therewith with calm and quiet Thoughts; composes and stills every wild and disorderly Passion; and consults the Publick Welfare, as well as secures its own private Ease. So far is this happy Temper from injuring of others, that it studies to do them all the Good it can, quickly forgetting the Ills offer'd to itself, and
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seems to delight in nothing more than in promoting kind Offices, in provoking and inviting to Love, and to good Works. A Duty so excellent and amiable as this, is proper to be enforced in all Times, and at all Seasons ; and cannot be thought either foreign or unsuitable to the present Place or Occasion ; the obvious Design of which is to put an end to all Differences and Disputes in a judicial way ; to redress such Injuries and Wrongs as are apt to sour Men's Tempers, and instead thereof to plant and establish Peace and good Will amongst Friends and Neighbours, on the securest Basis of Righteousness and Justice. *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour ; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

The Doctrine of the Apostle, contain'd in the former Part of my Text, is clear and easy to be understood : The Conclusion drawn from it is just and elegant. I shall therefore, without any farther Preface, beg leave to pursue the following Method.

1st, To show how far the Law of Nature recommends this Duty.

2^{dly}, What higher Obligations the Christian Religion has laid upon us to the Practice of it.

3^{dly}, To apply the Whole to the present Occasion, I shall observe how far human Laws may be useful in promoting this excellent End.

It is as natural for Men to promote their own Happiness, as to desire the Continuance of their Beings. Life is valuable so long as 'tis pleasant, whilst it conveys fresh Delights to the Soul, and is a perpetual Spring, Joy, and Satisfaction. 'Tis the plain Intent of all Laws, Divine or Human, to advance our present, as well as our future Welfare; and Peace and Friendship do so directly tend to procure both these great Ends, that the Light of Nature itself has in all Ages directed Men to associate with their Fellow-Creatures, and to endear themselves to each other by mutual Kindness and Candour; which is certainly the best way to make us easy and happy, and to change this jarring Earth we now inhabit into a perfect Paradise: Since a little Experience may convince us, that the more Men converse with each other, the more polish'd and refin'd, more human and civil they grow; whilst Solitude and Retirement do usually destroy the natural Sweetness of our Tempers, and entirely unfit us for the more friendly Duties of a social Life. How joyless and unpleasant then must our Condition be, were we quite shut out from all the Advantages of Society: it must fare, in such a Case, with the Rational, as it would with the Natural World, should the Sun withdraw his Light and Heat, and cease to shine upon it; for Kindness and Love enliven and adorn Society

ciety by their gentle Influence, as much as that bright Body enlightens and warms the Earth with its *Rays*. But the natural Obligations to this Duty will more fully appear :

1st, From the Order of the World.

2dly, From the Wants and Necessities of the Human Nature.

3dly, From the natural Desire of Society.

First, From the Order of the World.

We justly admire the Order and Contrivance of the Works of Nature, which do all serve in their proper Places for Use and Benefit, or else for Beauty and Ornament. But let's consider whence this Order rises ; by what Means the Creation appears so fair and beautiful : Is not the goodly Appearance of the Whole entirely owing to the Agreement of all the Parts ? The regular and harmonious Motions of the heavenly Bodies are delightful as well as profitable to us : the quick Successions of Night and Day : the constant Returns of Summer and Winter are beneficial, as well as pleasant : And whence does all this regular Variety proceed ? but from the united Harmony and joint Concurrence of all the Parts of the Universe, and that mutual Dependence which maintains and preserves the whole Creation. And should we pass from Things inanimate, to view the World of Life ;
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do not the Beasts that perish, associate with, and assist, as far as they are able, those of their own Species? Instinct alone directs them to express their Kindness to each other, by such Marks and Tokens of it as they are capable of shewing. Since therefore the Almighty has establish'd the Heavens, and fix'd the Foundations of the Earth on these unshaken Pillars of Peace and Union; seeing all Nature so cheerfully obeys these just and reasonable Laws, what little reason has Man, the Lord of the Creatures, and for whose Use all Nature was made, to be disobedient and obstinate: Let him rather observe the Order by which the World subsists; consider from whence it flows, and thence discover what is his Duty, and wherein his Happiness consists.

Happy indeed, beyond expression, should we be, if a stubborn World would consult a little for its own Peace and Security! Could Men be taught to lay aside their rough unsofiable Passions, and learn to practise the gentler Arts of Friendship and Familiarity: Could we comply a little with the Humours, and bear with the Infirmities of our Fellow-Creatures, we should find the Face of Things quickly alter'd for the better: All that is sour or untractable in our Tempers would be softned into Humanity, and by insensible Degrees grow up to Love. But this being a Condition of Life not to be hop'd for on this side the Grave, and least

of all to be expected from the present Appearance of Things, let us consider,

Secondly, How far the Wants and Necessities of Human Nature oblige us to the Practice of this Duty.

The Privilege of Speech, a Blessing deny'd to all the rest of the Animal World, shows that Man was in a peculiar manner design'd for Society; for by this means he can with ease convey his Thoughts, impart his Pleasure, or discover his Uneasiness to those about him; and when Business of Importance calls for it, is capable of giving Advice to his Friend, as well as of receiving his Counsel and Assistance. Nor is he only thus fitted for Society, but finds his Welfare in great measure depends upon it; for a wise Providence has so dispos'd and order'd our Affairs, that none are able to subsist, at least not to enjoy the Comforts and Sweets of Life without the Help of others. So that our Happiness is conveyed unto us through our Neighbours Hands. No one rises to Honour, or gets a great Estate meerly by his own Care or Endeavours; the seasonable Assistance of some, the good Wishes and Encouragement of others, have been great Means of attaining the desir'd End: And when these Points are once gain'd, neither Greatness nor an affluent Fortune can be well supported without the help of Friends, and the Increase of Dependants. If Riches or

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Grandeur are thus maintain'd, a meaner Condition of Life must be render'd easy and tolerable, by the Tenderness and Good Nature of those who are plac'd in a higher Station. I need not mention the Wants of tender Infants, or the Weakness of decrepit Age ; since the Well-being of Men, in whatever State or Circumstance they are view'd, does chiefly depend on their mutual Kindness and Benevolence towards each other ; such reciprocal Acts of Favour and Respect, the giving, and in this manner returning Benefits, must needs promote the Peace and Order of the World, and join Mankind together in closer Bonds of Love and Friendship. Thus our very Wants and Necessities serve for noble Purposes ; they force us to the Practice of those Duties which our own Desire and Inclination lead us to : Which brings me to consider,

Thirdly, OUR natural Desire of Society.

If Prejudice and Passion were laid aside, and the mild Dictates of uncorrupted Nature permitted to govern the World, Mankind would soon put off their austere Behaviour, and all the Acts of Kindness and Humanity encrease and flourish ; whilst all who enjoy'd the common Blessings of Society, would endeavour to promote the Publick Good. Such Principles as these, which as naturally flow from unfulled Reason as pure Streams from a clear Fountain,

do at once tend to secure the Whole, and to fix the Happiness of every Part, by settling the Affairs of Men on the sure Foundation of Peace and Union: And these softer Sentiments of Human Nature, although they may seem to be suppress'd and stifled by Envy and Ill Will, yet do upon some Occasions discover themselves, and melt the hardest Heart. Who is there, tho' a Stranger to generous Love and disinterested Friendship, that is not touch'd with Pity and Compassion, when the Miseries and Misfortunes of a Fellow-Creature are before his Eyes, when distress'd Innocence, or neglected Virtue arises to his View? And this compassionate Disposition, when not turn'd out of its proper Channel, or confin'd within the narrow Limits of private Love, will carry us to help and relieve those who are in Distress, and to express our Concern by Acts of Kindness and Tenderness. Thus is pure and untainted Nature mild and gentle, breathing out nothing but Benevolence and Good Will towards all. And if the natural Bent of our own Minds, if unprejudic'd Reason can't determine our Choice, yet our Desire of Ease and Happiness, and our strong Aversion to whatever may disturb our Peace, or interrupt our Repose, will most effectually prevail upon us to practise this great and necessary Duty of Brotherly Love.

And now were we perfect Strangers to the World about us, we might easily imagine that
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all around was quiet and still ; that not the least Breath of Anger, or Resentment, could be heard amongst Man ; that no one would go beyond, or defraud his Brother, nor any Body offer an Injury to his Neighbour, lest some Disorder should ensue, and his own private Ease as well as the publick Quiet be disturb'd thereby. But, alas ! the Passions of Men are too strong and violent to be kept within the Bounds of Nature or Reason ; they are unconfin'd, and like a mighty Stream, carry all before them. In order therefore to keep our unruly Appetites within those just Bounds which Religion has set them, our Saviour and his Apostles do often and earnestly recommend the Love of our Neighbour ; on this hang all the Law and the Prophets : And in the Text 'tis call'd the fulfilling of the Law ; which leads me to shew,

2dly, THOSE higher Obligations, which the Christian Religion lays upon us to the Practice of this Duty.

Acts of Kindness and Tenderneſs are recommended to us by the Law of Nature, so far as they tend to our present Good, and temporal Advantage, to keep up Order and Decency in the World, to preserve the Peace and Quiet of Mankind : But the Rewards promis'd in the Gospel being greater, and the Prize more noble, so the Duty rises much higher, and the Obligations

gations become more strong: The Christian Charity therefore must be more open, free, and diffusive; and like the common Blessings of Life, the Sun and Air descend on all; for the Christian Religion has join'd us together in a closer Bond of Friendship and Alliance: We are now not only Partakers of the same common Nature, but are all Members of the same Body, united under one Head; we have the same Race to run, and if we preserve our Integrity to the last, without fainting, and without giving back, we shall all at our Journey's End receive a Crown of Immortality. A Christian then should love his Neighbour as himself, being bought with the same Price, immortal as himself, Heir of the same Hopes, and Contender for the same glorious Prize. These indeed are strong Inducements to a reasonable Mind: But that nothing might be wanting to enforce this Duty, we are commanded to express our Love to GOD by Acts of Kindness and Benevolence to our Brethren: This Commandment have we from him, says St. *James*, that he who loveth GOD, love his Brother also. This is a Precept which came down from the Father of Light and Truth; 'tis GOD's Command, and therefore if we love him, we shall keep it. And surely we can't be so unjust or ungrateful, as to deny this reasonable Tribute of Love and Gratitude, to Him in whom we live, and move, and have our Being; who has given us all those Blessings

Blessings we at present enjoy, and on whose good Pleasure all our future Hopes entirely depend : And these Benefits he has bestow'd upon us out of pure Kindness and Compassion ; for nothing but a Desire of diffusing his Goodness, and scattering his Bounty, could move the Almighty to call forth Order out of Confusion : And that this was his chief Inducement, appears from the general Survey of his Works at the end of the Sixth Day, when *He saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good.* He view'd the whole Creation, full as it was of Order and Ornament, and pronounc'd with Pleasure, that it was all as beautiful as it was new : His Happiness as well as his Nature was compleat and perfect, incapable of Increase, and not subject to Decay : Nothing therefore but infinite Love could incline him to an Act of infinite Goodness. Nor did GOD create the World meerly to declare his Greatness ; but by his Mercy preserves what he made by his Power ; heaping his Benefits upon us with a liberal Hand, freely bestowing unenvy'd Good, and filling all Things living with Plenteousness. What Returns are due for such great and undeserv'd Bounty ! Who can be unkind or uncharitable to his Fellow-Creature, and at the same Time remember the Love of GOD towards him ! 'Tis the Argument, our blessed Saviour uses, whilst he is persuading to those higher Acts of Christian Charity, *Love your enemies,*
says

says He, *bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.* And then, as an Encouragement to a ready and cheerful Obedience, he lays before us the great Example of God the Father, in his Dealings towards the Children of Men, that ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and on the Good, and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt and on the Unjuſt. By nothing therefore can we ſo nearly approach the Deity, as by Expreſſions of our Kindneſs and Candour towards all: by theſe Means we ſhow our Love to God, and a Deſire to imitate, as far as frail Mortality is able, the unattainable Perfections of the Divine Nature; and are in ſome Meaſure perfect, even as *our Father which is in heaven is perfect.* Nay, ſo agreeable is this excellent Duty to our heavenly Father, and well-pleaſing in his Sight, that St. *John* tells us, *God is love.* This is indeed the moſt lively Image of the Divine Nature, which we can poſſibly form to ourſelves: This is his darling Attribute; 'tis what he moſt peculiarly delights in. Nothing therefore can give us ſo juſt a Notion of that Being who governs the World, as Love: And 'tis no Wonder that this is preferr'd before all other Chriſtian Duties, becauſe it frames and diſpoſes our Minds to reſiſh Life, and is the very Temper of Happineſs itſelf. And like-
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wife, because it is more lasting and durable than any other Précepts of the Gospel: Faith must fail, and Hope must have an end, but Charity never fails. Faith and Hope can last no longer than the Conclusion of a short uncertain Life; they are great Helps to us in our Passage through this World, but are of no farther Use when our Race is run, when we arrive at our Journey's End: Sight and Enjoyment leave no room then for Faith and Hope, but Charity will go along with us into the other World, and will be an excellent Ingredient of our Happiness there; it will render the Conversation of Heaven more agreeable and delightful, will make our Bliss more perfect and compleat, and will give us a better Relish of the Enjoyments of that happy Place.

LET us therefore consider,

3^{dly}, BY what Arts we may best preserve a candid, benevolent Disposition, and promote the Universal Practice of a great Duty, whose peculiar Excellence it is to improve, and perfect our Natures, to advance our Temporal Interest, as well as to secure our Eternal Welfare: And here I shall apply myself to the particular Occasion of our present Meeting, by endeavouring to shew how far Human Laws may be of Service in attaining this admirable End.

AND this Benefit we may reap from them ;

1st, By the early Care they take in restraining of Injuries.

2^{dly}, By their promoting kind Offices.

DID Men but listen to the Voice of Reason, or lend an Ear to the milder Calls of a Religion, peaceable as well as pure, the World would be a much more comfortable Place to live in than now we find it; all Differences would be superseded, and nothing seen but a perfect Harmony, and a regular Appearance of Things. Such a desirable Change as this would very agreeably shift the present Scene, and give us in its stead a delightful Prospect indeed; it pleases in the Description, but is at best no other than a pleasing Dream: This is a Perfection of Bliss too joyous and secure for our present unsettled Condition: So long as we are cloathed with Bodies of Flesh, none can hope to be free from human Frailties; Prejudice or Passion may deceive or misguide us, and, like false Lights, lead us into an Error: great, or unlook'd for Misfortunes may ruffle and discompose the most stedfast Mind. A sudden Heat, or a hasty Surprise may overtake us, perhaps transport us beyond the Bounds of Reason: against such unforeseen Accidents 'tis not in the Power of
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meer Man to be always guarded; the wisest and best may be betrayed into them: yet these Starts and Sallies do but little Mischief to Society; they seldom last long, or greatly disturb its Peace. There are other Ills of a much more dangerous Nature, which calls for all the Art and Skill of wise Law-givers to fence against, and require their utmost Care and Diligence to repress and restrain. In Matters of Right and Wrong, were there no Courts of Justice erected, there could be no certain redress of Injuries; Disputes would be endless; Time and fresh Grievances would widen the Breach, and no Hopes could this way be left of ever coming to a friendly Agreement: every one would set up for a Judge in his own Cause, and, when it lay in his power, to be an Avenger too. From these Inconveniencies we are happily secur'd, who live under the Protection of a good Government, and enjoy the Benefit of wholesome Laws; which, when duly executed, cannot fail to balance and settle the various Interests of contending Parties; to relieve the Injured, to punish the Oppressor, and to distribute equal and impartial Justice to all. 'Tis far better indeed when any Matters of Dispute arise, to reconcile the Difference by the Advice and Interposition of Friends, before it be brought to a legal Trial: To this more amicable way of proceeding, our Saviour himself seems to allude, when he directs us to *agree with our adver-*

sary whilst we are in the way with him, before the Sparks of Envy and Ill-will have taken Fire, and are kindled into a Flame, for fear it should then prove too late to make a fair Retreat, lest the Adversary should deliver us to the Judge. If the Injury offer'd be small, Prudence will teach us to pass it by, and to sit down by the first Loss; if the Damage sustain'd be greater, we must then study, by an engaging Carriage, and by all the persuasive Arts of Kindness and Candour, to soften and melt our Enemy into Compliance, and to win him over to a better Temper: But when these gentler Methods fail, we must submit our Cause to a judicial Process; and may then safely acquiesce in this last and final Decision. Thus far even Religion itself will justify us, and bear us harmless, provided we do not engage so eagerly in the Pursuit of Justice, as to drop our Charity by the way; whilst we do not suffer our personal Resentments to mingle with our Debates. We may still lay Claim to our own undoubted Right, and at the same time preserve our former Benevolence to our Neighbour. From whence we may discover the farther Excellency of human Laws, as they serve not only to restrain Injuries, but, secondly, to promote Kindness and good Will.

Manifest Injustice, and the Sense of Injuries undress'd, is too apt to raise, and keep alive those sharp Resentments which are great Enemies

mies to Peace ; spoil good Neighbourhood, and occasion ill Blood amongst Friends : But when these unhappy Disputes at length come to be legally determin'd, every Thing then does easily revert into its natural Course and Order ; kind Offices begin to circulate, and flow with their wonted Freedom ; all those Obstructions being now remov'd, which before confin'd and stinted our Benevolence, and turn'd the Stream into a wrong Channel. The Way being thus clear'd before us, we might, now, methinks, rest secure from further Fear or Harm, and fairly conclude, that an End would quickly be put to all Strife.

But here we have other Differences to lament and bewail, which usually run as high, and are perhaps, less easy to reconcile than the former ; I mean our unhappy Divisions amongst ourselves : These seldom fall within the reach of human Laws to prevent, but do always occasion a Breach of Charity. How are we crumbled and broken into Sects and Parties ? The whole Nation feels the sad Effects of these Parrish Disputes ; the publick Welfare and Security is endanger'd thereby ; every private Person is a Sufferer.

How can a Kingdom, thus miserably divided against itself, be able to make any noble Stand, either against its more dangerous and common Enemy, the Papists on one hand, or the wild Enthusiast on the other. Could we
forget

forget our mutual Discords, and with one Consent unite in the hearty Defence of our present happy Establishment, both in Church and State, then might we hope to retrieve our lost Credit, and once more to become a great and a flourishing People. For those who act in a private Station, 'twould be best to leave the Direction of publick Affairs in those Hands in which it has pleas'd a wise Providence to place them; whatever their present Sufferings be, Time and Patience may bring them better Prospects: In the mean while, let the Advice of the Apostle take place with them, *to study to be quiet, and to mind their own business.* Being thus cemented and join'd together by these peaceful Arts, all our Quarrels would of course cease, the Occasion of them thus successfully remov'd, as easily as a Calm succeeds when the Storm is over, and the Winds which rais'd these Waves, abate and are still.

Having thus shown how far the Laws of Nature and Religion tend to promote Peace and Good Will, as well as the Usefulness of human Laws to enforce the Practice of these great Duties; I shall add a Motive or two, and so conclude. An indulgent Providence has freely bestow'd upon us many Favours and Benefits: Our wise Creator has rais'd us high in the Scale of Being, has given us Life and Reason: But what is Life without Society? And what solid Pleasure can arise from Society, when 'tis not temper'd

per'd with Love, with Kindness, and with Charity? Let us frequently call to mind that we are in this World Candidates for a better, and our present Condition is no other than a State of Probation. The Age of the longest Liver is but as a Span; Time in its utmost Extent bears no proportion to Eternity: Why then should we so eagerly pursue our present little Interests, and neglect Matters of infinitely greater concern? Wherefore should we waste our precious Moments in needless and trivial Contests? Death must shortly determine them; the Grave will put a final End to them: were it not much better that all these petty Differences were hush'd and compos'd, before our great Change come; that so, whenever we are call'd hence, we may leave this earthly Stage cool and in good Temper; then shall we lift up our Heads with Joy and Triumph at the great Day, and be finally admitted into those Regions of Bliss, where Love, and Peace, and Joy, for ever dwell.

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